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10 November 1950

MEMORANDUM:

TO: Richard Holmes

FROM: L 300

SUBJECT: General Reinhardt Gehlen

I made the statement in a recent pouch that the only thing Gehlen lacked in his repertory was a sympathetic press. The opening pages of Jürgen Thorwald's *es begann an der Weichsel* indicate that Gehlen is, in fact, not suffering in that regard. Thorwald's book, which is now in its third printing, portrays Gehlen in the first chapter as one of the unsung heroes of the German Army.

The book opens with Guderian tossing fitfully in his sleeping compartment as his special train takes him, on the night of 8 January 1945, across Germany to a fateful interview with Hitler on troop dispositions. Hitler has consistently and obstinately refused to withdraw the intact but isolated Army Group Nord or to release for the Eastern Front the reserve divisions of the broken Ardennes offensive. Guderian reflects: "The General Staff of the German Army allowed itself no illusions concerning the scale of the coming Soviet offensive. General Gehlen, head of Fremde Heere Ost, who consolidated the reports on the eastern foe, was as clever as he was conscientious, and his estimates of Soviet troop concentrations and Soviet intentions carried an incontestible weight. Guderian had no reason to question for a second the reliability of his colleague...The reports which Gehlen had presented since November had at first given even Guderian--despite all previous experience--an impression of improbability, but nevertheless they were repeatedly demonstrated as being true."

After a sleepless night, Guderian goes to his office car, and buries himself again in his thoughts. He is startled out of his concentration by an opening door:

"In the doorway stood General Gehlen. His sharply chiselled face was pale, with a yellowish undertone. He suffered from the occupational disorder of so many overworked General Staff officers, stomach ulcers.

"Herr Generaloberst," he said, "I have completed another special estimate of the strength ratio in the Baranov beachhead area, and have included the very latest information. According to this information, the enemy is deployed on a 90 kilometer front with five infantry armies, six armored divisions, one self contained armored corps, and five armored

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brigades. The ratio of infantry strength now is 11:1 in favor of the enemy, in armor it is 7:1, and in artillery 20:1. Soviet artillery is deployed at some points in concentrations of 250 pieces to the kilometer. The conclusions are so evident that they should convince even the Führer that we face a catastrophe unless something is done.'

"Guderian looked squarely into Gehlen's face. Gehlen, too, judged on sober reason. He had no contact with the world in which decisions were based on instincts, inspirations, and moods. 'Gehlen,' Guderian said, 'today is our last chance.'"

Only a few days before, Guderian had pleaded with Hitler and gone over the same ground, but Hitler "refused to recognize that his despised opponent, Stalin, could assemble the reported strength. He spoke again of the 'random rabble' and 'plunder divisions' remaining to Stalin. He had screamed that General Gehlen, in company with his estimates, belonged in an insane asylum. He ignored Guderian's objection that Hitler could put him in the same asylum, since he concurred in Gehlen's opinion.

"Now Guderian stopped his pacing. 'We must achieve it today,' he reiterated. 'This is the last chance left for us. Gehlen, don't let yourself be swayed by anything during our conference. Remain calm even if the Führer permits himself to be drawn into insulting the General Staff and you personally.'

"Gehlen understood. He spread out his maps and papers. While Gehlen was thus occupied, Guderian continued his pacing. 'I will repeat once more,' he said, 'the most important parts of our presentation....'"

They arrived in Ziegenberg, were conducted to Jodl's briefing room, Hitler entered, and the conference began:

"Guderian, his face betraying his deep feeling, took his place at Hitler's left side. Hitler gazed across at Gehlen, who remained erect and expressionless. Hitler sensed in Gehlen the personification of cold, unyielding reality--a reality to which he would not surrender until it finally engulfed him and forced his pawns in the East, the South, and the West to pay the price of his obstinacy. His face assumed an expression of rejection.

"'My Führer,' began Guderian, 'I come back to present the facts to you personally again...for this purpose I have brought with me General Gehlen himself...'"

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Jürgen Thorwald, you will remember, is the nom de plume of Heinz Bongartz, a former special reporter for the German Navy, and a ZIPPER Special Connection. According to [] the manuscript of es begann an der Weichsel was read and toned down by ZIPPER before publication. Guderian's memoirs, currently in manuscript, have been subjected to the same moderating influence.

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